

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2415

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 2451

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PINS CG
SUBJ: SHABA INVASION - CONSULTATIONS WITH MOBUTU

1. I MET WITH MOBUTU FOR ABOUT AN HOUR THIS MORNING MAR 18 AT MY REQUEST IN FRAMEWORK OF KEEPING IN CLOSE TOUCH RE SHABA DEVELOPMENTS. AMONG POINTS COVERED WERE FOLLOWING:

2. US ASSISTANCE: I CONFIRMED THAT SECOND PLANE BRINING COMMO GEAR, C-130 PARS, ETC WAS BEING PREPARED AND EXPECTED TO ARRIVE EARLY NEXT WEEK. MOBUTU EXPRESSED SATISFACTION AND SAID THAT IN THIS REGARD HE WANTED ME TO CONVEY FOLLOWING MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT CARTER: HE GREATLY APPRECIATES US EFFORTS TO HELP ZAIRE AT THIS TIME OF URGENT NEED. HE UNDERSTANDS, HOWEVER, THERE ARE SOME DIFFICULT QUESTIONS WHICH THE SITUATION POSES FOR THE US AND WANTS TO ASSURE US THAT AT NO TIME AND IN NO CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD HE EVER REQUEST THE USG TO SEND MILITARY FORCES TO ZAIRE. MATERIAL AND ARMS ARE ONE THING; BUT TROOPS ARE ANOTHER AND ZAIRE HAS NO INTENTION OF BECOMING FOR US ANOTHER VIET-NAM. I THANKED THE PRESIDENT FOR HIS MESSAGE WHICH, I SAID, SHOWED UNDERSTANDING OF AMERICAN CONCERN. I ASSURED MOBUTU I WOULD TRANSMIT HIS MESSAGE TO WASHINGTON, WHEREUPON MOBUTU SAID HE WOULD BE HAPPY TO PUT IT

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IN WRITING IF WE WISHED.

3. SHABA DEVELOPMENTS: MOBUTU HAD LITTLE TO OFFER ON THE MILITARY SITUATION, OTHER THAN EXPRESSING GENERAL CONCERN ABOUT THE CONTINUED ATTACK IN SHABA AND CONFIDENCE THAT HIS FORCES COULD MEET THE CHALLENGE WITH ADEQUATE SUPPORT. HE SAID GENERAL BABIA WOULD CONTINUE TO KEEP CHIEF ZAMISH INFORMED OF DEVELOPMENTS AND PLANS

IN THE FIELD (SEPTELS). MOBUTU EXPRESSED DISMAY AT THE GREAT DIFFICULTY IN COMMUNICATING WITH THE COMBAT AREA, AND I AGREED THS WAS INDEED A SERIOUS PROBLEM. I SAID, FOR EXAMPLE, IT WAS VERY DIFFICULT TO GET SOLID INFORMATION ON THE COMPOSITION OF THE ATTACKING FORCES, TO WHAT EXTENT ANGOLANS, CUBANS OR OTHER FOREIGNERS WERE INVOLVED. SUCH INFORMATION WAS IMPORTANT IN LIGHT OF CONTINUING ANGOLAN PROTESTATIONS THAT THIS WAS ENTIRELY ZAIRIAN AFFAIR. MOBUTU ACKNOWLEDGED MY POINT, BUT WENT ON TO SAY THAT, EVEN IF MOST OF ATTACKERS WERE GENDARMES, ANYONE WHO COULD READ A MAP COULD TELL THAT THE INVASION WAS LAUNCHED FROM ANGOLA AND THEREFORE WAS CLEARLY A CASE OF OUTSIDE AGGRESSION. IF A GROUP OF AMERICAN DISSIDENTS ATTACKED CALIFORNIA FROM ACROSS THE MEXICAN BORDER, WOULD WE CALL THAT A PURELY US INTERNAL AFFAIR? I SAID ANGOLA'S INVOLVEMENT WAS CLEAR TO ME AND THE US GOVT, BUT FROM MEDIA REPORTS IT SEEMED DOUBTS PERSISTED ELSEWHERE.

4. MOBUTU WENT ON TO SAY HOW UPSET HE WAS BE INACCURATE REPORTS OF THE BATTLEFIELD SITUATION BEING CARRIED BY FOREIGN WIRE SERVICES, NOTABLY AFP IN KINSHASA. (MOBUTU HAD TELEPHONED ME NIGHT BEFORE IN QUITE A STATE ABOUT AFP REPORT THAT KOLWEZI HAD FALLEN, CLAIMING ALSO THAT VOA WAS CARRYING THIS FALSE REPORT; NGUZA SUBSEQUENTLY CONFIRMED THAT GOZ INTENDS TO EXPEL AFP REP FOR THIS AND NUMBER OF OTHER ERRONEOUS STORIES FILED IN THE PAST.) I TOOK OCCASION TO NOTE THAT THERE WERE NOW A NUMBER OF AMERICAN CORRESPONDENTS IN TOWN SEEKING ACCESS TO THE SHABA AREA, SUGGESTING THIS MIGHT BE GOOD WAY TO PROVIDE WORLD WITH MORE ACCURATE BALANCED VIEW OF WHAT IS GOING ON THERE AND AT SAME TIME COUNTER SOME OF OBVIOUSLY SLANTED REPORTS COMING FROM LUANDA, HAVANA, ETC. MOBUTU SAID HE WOULD MAKE ONE-DAY VISIT TO KOLWEZI MAR 19 AND
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ASKED ME TO INVITE ALL US JOURNALISTS IN TOWN TO ACCOMPANY HIM. (THIS WE HAVE DONE).

5. FURTHER DISCUSSION RE DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES BEING REPORTED
SEPTEL.
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